

Family Connections

Volume 4, Issue 1, Summer 2005

Legislation Watch

Adoption subsidy

During the 2005 legislative session, there were changes made to the adoption subsidy program. As of this summer, the maintenance portion of adoption subsidy will be available to a child if:

- 1) the child is Title IV-E eligible; or
- 2) the household has income less than 250% of the federal poverty level.

What is Title IV-E?

Title IV-E is a federal program that pays 67% of most adoption subsidies, while the state provides a 33% match. This is good for our state, but not all kids are eligible to participate in the program. If your child is Title IV-E eligible, then your child's subsidy agreement will not be based on a means test. If a child is not eligible for Title IV-E, then MO pays 100% of the subsidy. Children who are NOT Title IV-E eligible will be means tested.

Who is eligible for Title IV-E?

According to the Federal Government, a state is required to enter into an adoption assistance agreement with the adoptive parents of a child with special needs (as defined in section 473(c) of the Social Security Act) and provide adoption assistance if the child meets specific requirements. There are four ways that a child can be eligible for Title IV-E adoption assistance:

1. Child is eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and meets the definition of a child with special needs.
2. Child is eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits and meets the definition of a child with special needs.
3. Child is eligible as a child of a minor parent and meets the definition of a child with special needs.

4. Child is eligible due to prior Title IV-E adoption assistance eligibility and meets the definition of a child with special needs.

(Additional information can be found on the Children's Bureau website, www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws/cwpm/policy_dsp.jsp?citID=32).

Is your child IV-E eligible?

The only way to know for certain is to call your adoption subsidy worker and ask them to look at your child's ZCAS screen.

If my child is affected, will all services be cut?

The cuts apply only to the maintenance portion of the adoption subsidy and subsidized guardianship agreements.

"Subsidy" continued on Page 2

In This Issue:

Legislative Update

New law for adoption and subsidized guardianship

Foster Parent Committee

Local and state boards working for you

Youth Advocacy

Financial assistance to help youth on their transition to adulthood

Support Groups & Training

Resource Rescue

Therapeutic Day Treatment

And Much, Much, More ...

Meet Raynal

A "Jack of all trades" ... an athlete and a cook

Outgoing and energetic, this pleasant young man loves to be busy! A natural athlete, Raynal spends his leisure time playing football and basketball, taking long bike rides, and hanging out with his friends. Now that baseball season is here, he's looking forward to joining a team so that he can demonstrate his hitting and base running skills. School is a big part of Raynal's life. He earns average to above average grades, and would do well if he were placed with someone who would help him with homework and encourage him to study hard. Raynal is eleven years old.

In addition to sports and school, Raynal loves going on outings with interested adults. Blessed with good health, he has a healthy appetite and likes a variety of foods. Some of his "favs" are peanut butter and jelly, bologna sandwiches, spinach, chicken, fish and cookies (which he loves to bake, with his foster mom's help).

To learn more about Raynal, contact Renita Jones, Adoption Specialist, St. Louis City Children's Division at 314-340-4810 or e-mail renita.s.jones@dss.mo.gov.



What is a means test?

The means test will be applied using the family's total or gross income from the federal tax return in comparison to 250% of the federal poverty guideline.

The following are the 2005 poverty levels, calculated from the Federal Register on February 18, 2005.

250% above Poverty
Family of 2 - \$32,075
Family of 3 - \$40,225
Family of 4 - \$48,375
Family of 5 - \$56,525
Family of 6 - \$64,675
Family of 7 - \$72,825
Family of 8 - \$80,975
each additional person add \$8,150

Will all contracts expire?

Yes, all contracts (current and future) will expire annually. Before, adoption subsidy contracts were in effect until the child turned 18, and were re-negotiated on an annual basis. Now, with the passage of SB539, they will be re-written on an annual basis. However, any service and their original end date that are written on your child's agreement will be transferred exactly as they appear from the previous contract to the new agreement.

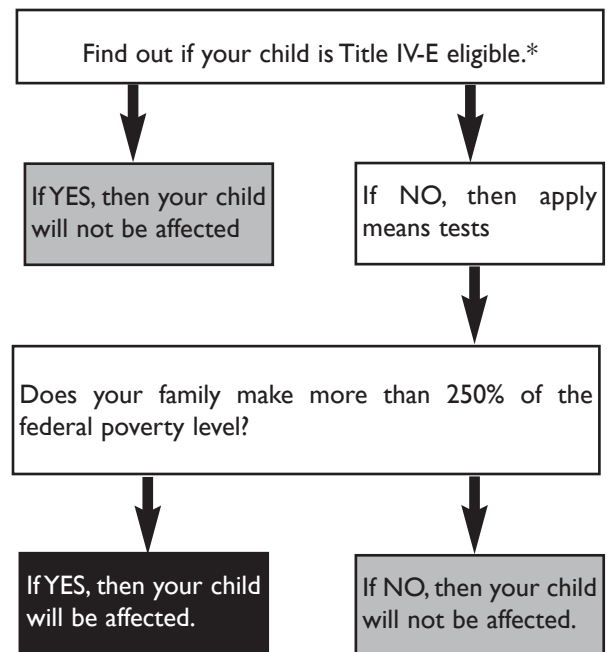
Any agreement negotiated for Title IV-E or non Title IV-E adoption subsidy or subsidized guardianship signed to be effective on or after September 1, 2005 will be dated for a **maximum of one year**. Each year local staff will develop a new agreement with each family for their services to continue. Non Title IV-E and subsidized guardianship will require that the means test be applied each year as the new agreement is developed to determine eligibility. (**NOTE:** Although a means test of 250% is applied this year, the law is written at 200% and could therefore be lowered in subsequent years).

What is the Children's Division doing to help?

Title IV-E adoption subsidy agreements are being automatically extended until June 30, 2006. Current agreements for non Title IV-E subsidies are extended until August 31, 2005.

This is confusing; please clarify!

Try this chart.



***Federal regulations do not allow children in guardianship placements to be Title IV-E eligible.**

WANTED: INFORMATION

Want to know more about policy and legislative changes as they happen? There are 2 great listservs available to you. Western Missouri residents can join MFCAA's listserv at www.mfcaa.org. Eastern Missouri residents should email denisekelley@foster-adopt.org to join the FACC listserv.

Foster Parent Rights & Responsibilities

In 2002, the Foster Parent Bill of Rights and Responsibilities was passed into law. The bill was comprised of a lot of very good policy that was already in place and in practice by the Children's Division. Below is a copy of the law which is a great reminder for parents as to what their responsibilities are as well as their specific rights as a Missouri foster parent.

1. The division of family services and its contractors shall treat foster parents with courtesy, respect and consideration. Foster parents shall treat the children in their care, the child's birth family and members of the child welfare team with courtesy, respect and consideration.

2. (1) The division of family services and its contractors shall provide foster parents with training, pre-service and in-service, and support. The division of family services and its contractors shall share all pertinent information about the child and the child's family, including but not limited to, the case plan with the foster parents to assist in determining if a child would be a proper placement. The division of family services and its contractors shall inform the foster parents of issues relative to the child that may jeopardize the health or safety of the foster family. The division of family services and its contractors shall arrange pre-placement visits, except in emergencies. The foster parents may ask questions about the child's case plan, encourage a placement or refuse a placement without reprisal from the caseworker or agency. After a placement, the division of family services shall update the foster parents as new information about the child is gathered. Foster parents shall be informed of upcoming meetings and staffings, and shall be allowed to participate, consistent with section 210.761. The division of family services shall establish reasonably accessible respite care for children in foster care for short periods of time, jointly determined by foster parents and the child's caseworker pursuant to section 210.545.

(2) Foster parents shall treat all information received from the division of family services about the child and the child's family as confidential. Foster parents may share information they may learn about the child and the child's family with the caseworker and other members of the child welfare team. Recognizing that placement changes are difficult for children, foster parents shall seek all necessary information, and participate in pre-placement visits, before deciding whether to accept a child for placement. Foster parents shall follow all procedures defined by the division of family services for requesting and using respite care.

3. (1) Foster parents shall make decisions about the daily living concerns of the child, and shall be permitted to continue the practice of their own family values and routines while respecting the child's cultural heritage. All discipline shall be consistent with state laws and regulations. The division of family services shall

allow foster parents to help plan visitation between the child and the child's biological family.

(2) Foster parents shall provide care that is respectful of the child's cultural identity and needs. Foster parents shall recognize that the purpose of discipline is to teach and direct the behavior of the child, and ensure that it is administered in a humane and sensitive manner. Recognizing that visitation with family members is an important right, foster parents shall be flexible and cooperative in regard to family visits.

4. (1) Consistent with state laws and regulations, the state may provide, upon request by the foster parents, information about a child's progress after the child leaves foster care. Except in emergencies, foster parents shall be given advance notice consistent with division policy, and a written statement of the reasons before a child is removed from their care. If a child re-enters the foster care system, the child's foster parents shall be considered as a placement option. If a child becomes free for adoption while in foster care, the child's foster family shall be given preferential consideration as adoptive parents consistent with section 453.070, RSMo.

(2) Confidentiality rights of the child and the child's parents shall be respected and maintained. Foster parents shall inform the child's caseworker of their interest if a child re-enters the system. If a foster child becomes free for adoption and the foster parents desire to adopt the child, they shall inform the caseworker in a timely manner. If they do not choose to pursue adoption, foster parents shall make every effort to support and encourage the child's placement in a permanent home. When requesting removal of a child from their home, foster parents shall give reasonable advance notice, consistent with division policy, to the child's caseworker, except in emergency situations.

5. (1) Foster parents shall be informed by the court in a timely manner of all court hearings pertaining to a child in their care, and informed of their right to attend and participate, consistent with section 211.464, RSMo.

(2) Foster parents shall share any concerns regarding the case plan for a child in their care with the child's caseworker, as well as other members of the child welfare team, in a timely manner.

6. Foster parents shall have timely access to the child placement agency's appeals process, and shall be free from acts of retaliation when exercising the right to appeal.

7. Foster parents shall know and follow the policies of the division of family services, including the appeals procedure.

8. For purposes of this section, "foster parent" means a resource family providing care of children in state custody.

Youth Advocacy -- Education

"It is far easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." -- Frederick Douglass

Chafee

Supporting youth as they transition to adulthood

The Chafee Foster Care Independence program was created through the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. The purpose of the program was to expand services to youth ages 18-21 who were emancipated from the foster care system.

The aim of independent living services is to support youth in foster care as they transition into adulthood.

The Chafee Foster Care Independence program is for youth:

- who are likely to remain in foster care until the age of 18.
- who are between the ages of 14 and 21.
- who were in foster care until the age of 17.5 or older but have not reached the age of 21.

The Chafee program offers services such as:

- Healthy relationship and self-esteem building.
- Training in daily living skills, budgeting and financial management.
- Assistance in obtaining a high school diploma or GED.
- Vocational training, job placement and retention.
- Preventive health services (i.e. substance abuse).
- Mentors.
- Crisis intervention funds (i.e. rent).
- Financial and housing services for former foster care youth ages 18-21.

To find out who the ILP Coordinator is in your county, ask your child's case manager or find the contact information on the internet at www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/index.htm.

Knowledge is Power

FosterClub is a non-profit organization offering free services to youth in foster care, alternative care providers, and child welfare professionals. www.FosterClub.com is their primary project. The website is targeted to youth and provides information related to foster care, including articles, questions and answers, message boards, contests, and discussions about foster care.

FosterClub has also added programs to help adults support kids in foster care. www.FosterClub.com/grownups is designed for caseworkers and social workers, independent living providers, advocates, and foster parents. It provides resources, tools, and articles in an effort to inspire creative ways to work and communicate with foster youth.

Other Helpful Links:

www.caseylifeskills.org
nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd/default.htm
www.fyi.org
www.statevoucher.org

Fact or Fiction?

Statement: Youth must complete Independent Living Program (ILP) classes to receive financial assistance through the Chafee Foster Care program.

Answer: FICTION. Although it is advised that youth in foster care participate in and complete the ILP curriculum, it is not a prerequisite for youth to access Chafee funds.

Education and Training Vouchers

Financial assistance for youth in foster care, former foster care youth, AND youth adopted after age 16

Promoting Safe and Stable Families has expanded the federally funded program to include an educational and training voucher program. The addition allows youth aging out of foster care and youth adopted from foster care at age 16 or older to receive as much as \$5,000 per year toward the cost of their degree/certification. Youth participating in the program at the age of 21 may continue to receive funding until they reach the age of 23 as long as they are enrolled in a qualifying program and making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program. To receive an application for the voucher program, contact your local Children's Division Independent Living Program Specialist. Not sure who your specialist is? Ask your child's casemanager or go to www.dss.mo.gov/cd/chafee/index.htm. You can also obtain an application for the voucher at this site.

Firearm Safety

What you can do to keep kids safe

In the United States, accidents involving firearms kill 250 children under the age of 14 every year. Missouri is not exempt from this tragedy. In 2004, 36 children were killed by a firearm. Already in 2005, 13 Missouri children have died as a result of a firearm injury. Experts agree the best way to prevent these deaths is to eliminate guns from your home.

As a resource family, you have an added responsibility to ensure that you comply with your state laws and agency regulations or policies related to firearms. If you do own a firearm, follow these rules to ensure the safety of children in your family:

- Store guns unloaded and in an uncocked position in a securely locked case out of children's reach. Store ammunition separately, in a securely locked container out of reach of children.

"Safety" continued on Page 5

Youth Advocacy -- Research & Policy

Helping You to Help "Our" Youth

Foster Care Runaways

Understanding and preventing the behavior

Chapin Hall, a research center located at the University of Chicago, recently conducted the largest study of youth in foster care that run away from their placement. The findings from the study are important due to the risk factors children are exposed to when they are "on the run." It is the hope that such research will help child welfare professionals and foster parents recognize the triggers and ultimately prevent a child from running away.

From the data collected, some significant factors were found. The findings suggest:

- 90 percent of those who ran away from care were between the ages of 12 and 18.
- Girls were more likely to run than boys.
- Youth who experienced placement instability were more likely to run than those with stable placement histories.
- Youth placed in foster home care were less likely to run than those in residential care. Those in kinship care were less likely to run than both groups.
- Youth placed with siblings were less likely to run than those placed on their own.
- While the likelihood of a first run was low and difficult to predict, youth who had run away once before were found to be very likely to do so again.

Researchers also collected data on trends in running away over time, what happened to youth when they ran away, and reasons why youth ran away. Some of their specific suggestions for how child welfare agencies can address runaways include:

- Facilitating relationships between foster youth and schools, foster families, and biological family members to provide youth with a

critical sense of consistency and stability.

- Involving youth in developmentally appropriate activities, to foster a sense of normalcy.
- Increasing attention to assessment and treatment of substance abuse and mental health issues.
- Focusing prevention efforts on engaging youth who run and return, to decrease the occurrence of subsequent runs.

The abstract, "Youth Who Run Away from Out-of-Home Care," is available on the Chapin Hall website at www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract_new.asp?ar=1385&L2=61&L3=130. Users may access the full-text article through a free registration process.

"Safety" continued

- Always use trigger locks or other childproof devices.
- Teach children that guns are not toys.
- Teach children to report to you if they find any guns or ammunition.
- If your child spends time in other homes, ask the parents if there are guns in the house and how they are stored.

For additional information check out the following websites.

- <http://www.med.umich.edu/llibr/yourchild/guns.htm>
- http://www.safekids.org/tier2_rl.cfm?folder_id=172
- <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/childhealthmonth/guns.htm>

For information on Missouri Statute and Children's Division policy related to firearms and other weapons, visit www.dss.mo.gov/cd and www.moga.state.mo.us.

If you have specific questions regarding weapons in your home make sure to contact your licensing worker.

Meet Valissa

Looking for a family to love and care for her

Valissa is so ready to be a part of a family that she wrote the following to help in the recruitment: "Hi, my name is Valisa. I'm looking for a family to live with. I like to play with kids. I like to hang around my school friends. I'm looking for a family who will be there for me when I get hurt or fall down. Also a family who loves me and cares for me too. I like to play a lot of sports. I am going to go to college when I grow up. You know, I thought I wouldn't be adopted but then I thought it over again. Maybe someone will read this and see my picture and will want to adopt me."

Valisa is an attractive African-American 14 year old teen. She is friendly with her peers and adults and likes to help others. Valisa is described as a sweet, compassionate and sensitive teen. Valisa is especially kind to animals. She is accepting of all types of families. She would like to have siblings and a pet.

For more information, contact Sheila Suderwalla, Director of Project Teen, 314-340-7785 or sheilasuderwalla@foster-adopt.org.



Foster Parent Advisory Committee

Local and state boards working for you

By Diane Bueneman, Chairperson

One way the Children's Division supports foster parents is through the on-going work of the Foster Parent Advisory Committee. Each area/region of the state holds local meetings headed by foster parents and supported by local Children's Division staff. The local boards work to resolve issues of local foster parents —i.e. problem solving, practice issues, and resource development. Some local boards combine meetings with training opportunities to assist parents in obtaining in-service hours. Any issues that can not be resolved locally are brought to the Statewide Foster Parent Advisory Committee.

Below is information on previous accomplishments and current work of the statewide committee.

State Advisory Board Meetings are held quarterly. They take place in March, June, September, and December at the Jefferson City Central Office.

The State Advisory Committee has been responsible for many improvements for foster parents, including: direct deposit, foster parent ID cards, diaper allowance, the Resource Handbook, and respite care policy changes.

During the meetings each area makes a report. Reports are also made by the Central Office liaison as well as the Ombudsman, the Missouri Foster Care & Adoption Association, the Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association, and the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition.

After hearing all of the reports the liaison investigates the resulting questions and concerns and reports back to the Committee. To be a voice that is heard at the State Advisory Board it is important to know who your local representative is--look to the following pages for that information. We want to be your voice.



Area 1—Northwest Region

Parent Rep.: Kris Ross; 660-886-5469

hdross@sbcglobal.net

CD Rep.: Amy Jackson; 660-258-3388

amy.jackson@dss.mo.gov

Area 2—Northeast Region

Parent Rep.: Diane Bueneman; 636-928-2198

fisherofthelake@yahoo.com

CD Rep.: Celesta Hartgraves; 573-592-4090

celesta.hartgraves@dss.mo.gov

The Northeast Region (Area 2) meets one week prior to the meeting in Jefferson City. We have a foster parent representative from each Court Circuit. The local CD office finds a Foster Parent to be a representative--anyone interested in being a representative should contact their Circuit Manager. A form is handed out at the meeting for each foster parent to complete. The form allows the foster parent to submit questions or concerns in their area. Each form is reviewed and discussed. The Children's Division liaison from the Northeast Region responds to questions and looks into the concerns that are brought to the table. It is also decided at that time which issues to bring to the statewide committee. Most questions and concerns are resolved at the local area meeting. In addition, some meetings include a guest speaker. In June we are having a much needed training on IEP's provided by IMPACT.

Area 3—Southeast Region

Parent Rep.: Joan Lowery; 573-996-7534

joanielowery@yahoo.com

CD Rep.: Frances Gould; 573-290-5656

frances.j.gould@dss.mo.gov

Area 4—Southwest Region

Parent Rep.: Robin Butts;

417-581-6475

robinlbutts@yahoo.com

CD Rep.: Julie Lester;

573-346-3363

julie.lester@dss.mo.gov

Meetings occur every three months, prior to the State meeting. The Southwest Region represents 10 circuits: 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 38th, 39th, 40th, and 44th. The group is trying to have a foster parent representative from each circuit, as well as a circuit director or worker to attend each meeting. During meetings, area reports are given and any concerns that foster parents have are addressed. We also have special speakers at some meetings. In March, Rick Hill presented on Out of Home Investigation issues. A report on the State Foster Parent Advisory Committee is also provided. The Southwest Region has made recommendations to the State Board for training related to hotlines.

The main purposes of the meetings are: 1. To share information/decisions handed down in the state meetings or via the state or area CD offices; 2. To share issues/suggestions that arise on the local level so they can be shared/ discussed/ resolved at the district meetings and taken to the state meetings if needed; and 3. To educate the board members on current procedures and training related to hotlines. resources available so they can be a resource of information for their circuit. Officers are: Robin Butts, Chairperson; Jim McKenna, Vice-Chair; Patricia Beard, Secretary.

Myth Busters

Foster/adopt parents can be one of the best recruiters for new foster/adopt families. Unfortunately, there are a lot of misperceptions in the community about foster and adoptive care. Below is some information to assist you in your ongoing effort to advocate for children in care.

Myth: Children in foster care grow up to be troubled adults.

Fact: Nearly 3/4 of former foster children studied by Casey Family Services had completed high school and were working.

Myth: Only young children are adopted.

Fact: Nationally, 63% of children adopted in 1999 were over 6 years old.

Myth: All it takes is love.

Fact: On-going services & support make the difference for foster/adopt families.

Information from www.caseyfamilyservices.org

Meet Danyelle

A self-described "good friend"

Danyelle is a beautiful 16-year-old young lady with a picture perfect smile. Danyelle describes herself as funny, smart, and a good friend. She enjoys reading books, listening, singing and dancing to music, talking on the phone, swimming and shopping. Danyelle's favorite foods are ramen noodles, Chinese, seafood and Taco Bell. The most important person in Danyelle's life is God.

Danyelle's teacher states she is a very intelligent young lady and on target academically. Danyelle's favorite subjects are art, reading, and computers. She has future plans of going to college and majoring in Art or Music.

When asked to describe her ideal adoptive family, Danyelle said she wants them to be "strong, nice, and active." She wants a family that will talk and listen to her and most importantly, "give me a lot of love." Danyelle is legally free for adoption.

For more detailed information about Danyelle, contact Angela Metzger, Downey Side, at 816-531-5465 or e-mail ametzger@downeyside.org.



Area 5 - Kansas City

Parent Rep.: Dorothy Patterson; 816-313-7633
dpatterson06@aol.com

Parent Rep.: Mary LeFebvre; 816-941-9506
laremare@aol.com

CD Rep.: Gretchen Wheaton-Weston; 816-889-2042
gretchen.j.wheatonweston@dss.mo.gov

CD Rep.: Patty Champion; 816-889-2114
patty.champion@dss.mo.gov

The Jackson County Foster Parent Advisory Committee meets the third Tuesday of every other month. The Board consists of Co-chairs Mary LeFebvre and Dorothy Patterson, Secretary Willie Hough and 1st Alternate Barbara Bivens. They were elected in the February 2004 meeting for a two year term. Meetings are open to any foster parent in Jackson County and Children's Division staff. The group found that foster parents in KC had a particular interest in the following areas: respite care changes, insurance needs for foster parents, reimbursement, and a pamphlet to help new foster parents trouble-shoot for themselves with helpful information and numbers. The CD staff also asked the group to help write the Joining Hands Newsletter to make it a joint effort between them and foster parents. Janet Richardson was the foster parent that accepted that challenge. New questions and new concerns are addressed at each meeting and the group continues to work on the unresolved issues. Maintaining regular participants at meetings is a challenge, but we continue to work to improve the lives of all foster parents in the State of Missouri.

Area 6 - St. Louis City

Parent Rep.: Rene Murph; 314-961-2660 ext. 7774
murphr@webster.edu

Parent Rep.: Ann Barfield; 314-534-1645
fieldbar@swbell.net

CD Rep.: Annette House; 314-340-4918
annette.g.house@dss.mo.gov

CD Rep.: Angie Sample; 314-340-4859
angela.m.sample@dss.mo.gov

Meetings are held once a quarter (February, May, August and November) on the second Monday of the month. Officers are: Rene Murph, Chairperson; Ann Barfield, Co-Chairperson; and Barbara Cole, Secretary. They were elected in December 2003 and are serving two year terms. Although the group has struggled with attendance, meetings continue to be held consistently and on schedule. Meetings are utilized to provide information and to address any issues or concerns that participants bring with them. The meetings are also used to inform foster parents of relevant information from the State meeting. Chairperson Rene Murph, is available by phone between meetings to answer questions and concerns. Information is also submitted in the Foster Fabric Newsletter, which St. Louis City Children's Division publishes and mails.

Area 7- St. Louis County

Parent Rep.: Marsh King; 636-938-9864
marshakng2@yahoo.com

Parent Rep.: Shelia Harris Wheeler; 636-978-4066
pajamas5@charter.net

CD Rep.: Betty Richardson; 314-426-8406
betty.j.richardson@dss.mo.gov

CD Rep.: Amy Grunwaldt; 314-426-8358
amy.s.grunwaldt@dss.mo.gov

The local St. Louis County Advisory Board is still in need of families who would be interested in participating in the local committee. The St. Louis County Foster Parent Advisory Board Committee is a group that consists of foster parents and Children's Division staff. The purpose of the Committee is to advocate for foster parents, to suggest things the local office may do to assist foster parents, and to enhance the team relationship of Children's Division staff and foster parents. The Committee also suggests, reviews, and advises on policies and procedures within the foster care unit. The Committee meets monthly at the local office. Concerns and suggestions brought up during meetings and are taken quarterly to the State Advisory Board Committee. Your help is needed to make the committee work. If you are interested in joining the Committee or have suggestions for tasks that this Committee may want to tackle, then please contact one of the Master Foster Parent committee members listed above. They are very anxious to hear from you.

In addition to parent representatives and Children Division staff, the statewide committee also has representatives from foster parent associations across the state. In addition, the Office of the Child Advocate was recently named as an honorary member. These members provide additional information and input.

Midwest Foster Care & Adoption Association

Lori Ross; 816-686-0463; rross600@aol.com

Michelle Winberry; 816-965-9998; mfcaa@mail.com

MFCAA has been working with families on the western side of the state and in partnership with the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition of St. Louis, to inform families and the legislature on the potentially devastating effects of the new law imposing a means test on adoptive families. Hundreds of staff and volunteer hours have gone into the effort to educate about the realities of adopting children from the foster care system, and that will be done to adoption in Missouri by this new law. While we have met with much lack of understanding from our legislators, we have come away with a more unified and passionate network of foster and adoptive families. This is positive for all of us as we continue our efforts into the next several months.

MFCAA continues to serve hundreds of adoptive and foster families through our monthly support and training meetings. Additional services are provided weekly through the use of our Foster and Adoptive Family Resource Center. This spring we are

pleased to announce the hiring of our first Fund Development Director, Linda McNicholas, who comes to us from a corporate background.

We hosted our own foster parent appreciation event on May 6th, in honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month.

Many of our families joined together for a massive potluck dinner and family fun night. We are in the preparation stages for our Third Annual Foster Care and Adoption Conference scheduled to be held on September 28, 29, and 30th of this year.

Missouri Foster Care & Adoption Association

Jim McKenna; 417-538-4362; d.j.jim@inter-linc.net

Office of the Child Advocate

Toll free number: 866-457-2302

The Office of the Child Advocate (formerly named the Office of the Child Welfare Ombudsman) was put into state statute in 2004 through HB 1453 to monitor and ensure compliance with relevant state and federal laws, rules, and policies pertaining to children's services and the placement, supervision, and treatment of children in the state's care. Staff at the Office of the Child Advocate act as impartial fact finders. The office provides citizens (including foster/adoptive parents) with an avenue through which they can obtain an independent and impartial review of the decisions made by the Department of Social Services/Children's Division.

The Office of the Child Advocate focuses on four work activities:

- Listening to Families and Citizens
- Responding to Complaints
- Improving the System
- Reviewing unsubstantiated hotline investigations when requested by the reporting party.

Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition

Denise Kelley; 800-FOSTER-3; denisekelley@foster-adopt.org

Thanks to the hundreds of foster and adoptive families who joined the statewide campaign to fight the adoption subsidy cuts. Over a three-month period, families took exhaustive measures to communicate concerns. They met with their legislators, held rallies, signed petitions, met with the Governor's office, wrote letters-to-the-editor, testified before House committees, and engaged the support of national adoption organizations. Although we were not (yet!) successful, we are very, very proud of the way families came together to work on behalf of our kids. We are also grateful to the extraordinary efforts of the Midwest Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition and other agencies throughout the state. It was gratifying to work with such knowledgeable professionals on this crucial issue.



Rally to Save Adoption Subsidy, March 18, 2005.

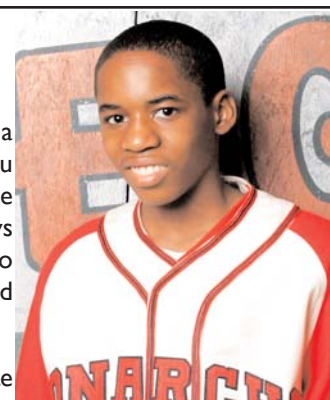
Meet Raymond

A bright young man who is kind to others

Raymond, 13, is a friendly, handsome young man. He is a little shy at first but will quickly warm up and charm you with his charismatic smile. Raymond is able to be quite serious but is also able to be playful. Raymond enjoys many activities including listening to music, playing video games, watching movies and playing outside. Raymond also enjoys sports such as baseball and basketball.

Raymond is a bright young man who is generally polite and kind to others. He is inquisitive and often takes adults by surprise with the advanced questions that he asks. Raymond does not always work up to his potential. When interested in a subject however, he engages fully in a task. Raymond enjoys time with his peers and he thrives from individual attention that he receives from adults.

Raymond is legally free for adoption. He is in need of a patient, loving family where he can feel protected and secure. Raymond would benefit from a family with a small number of children where he is able to receive individual attention. If you would like to learn more about Raymond, please contact: Leslie Atkins, Adoption Specialist, at 816-889-2180 or Leslie.G.Atkins@dss.mo.gov.



Support Groups & Training

Spread the word about your local support group or training opportunity. To list yours in the next edition of "Family Connections" e-mail denisekelley@foster-adopt.org or call 800-FOSTER-3.

Supporting Hands for our Children of Promise International

By Kathie Fagel, Staff at Children of Promise International, Foster/adoptive mother of three wonderful girls

This support group is for foster and adoptive families in Saline and Lafayette Counties. We started a support group in April 2004 called Support Hands for our Children for Foster and Adoptive Families. As an affiliate of Children of Promise, we are able to provide receipts of donations made for tax purposes. During the fall we hosted several meetings which included guest speakers and a rollerskating party in Higginsville for the families, with donations from Higginsville Rotary and the owners of the rink. On March 18th four families traveled to Kansas City to participate in the March to Save Adoption Subsidies.

We meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month. Our meetings start at 6:30pm with dinner and child care provided. Everyone who brings children is asked to donate \$1 a child, which is given to the teens that volunteer their time. The location of the meeting varies to draw new members. Mostly however, we meet in the meeting room at Children of Promise International, 102 W. Third, Alma, where we have storage for donated food, a lending library of videos, and clothing. We have had a slow start but now have five active families and others who are interested. We also have been given an office to use at this location.

We started receiving food from the food pantry at Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association (MFCAA), to share at the meetings. At the April meeting, we all received at least a dozen loaves of whole wheat bread, fresh veggies, two cases of granola cereal, candy and other miscellaneous food.

We share the clothes closet of Children of Promise International and will be having a work day in July to finish organizing the clothes that are there. We are going to actively start looking for donations of clothes to increase the supply for the children. We are working on a flier to hand out to friends and those having garage sales.

This summer we will be sending out letters to generate donations of supplies for our school age children. We are also collecting supplies (dishes, microwaves, toasters and such) for teenagers who are setting up their own apartments.

Please contact me with any question or for more information at kathie.fagel@promise.org or supportinghands@promise.org; Calls daytime: 660-674-2262; evening: 660-674-2220.

Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association St. Charles Chapter

By Judy Bextemuller, President, adoptive parent & former foster parent for 10 years

Our support group meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month (except July and January) starting at 7:00 PM at the St. Charles County Children's Division, 3737 Harry Truman Boulevard, St. Charles, MO 63301. You do not need to be a St. Charles County parent to come... anyone interested in the welfare of children in foster care is welcome! Guest speakers are usually present at the meetings which provide parents an opportunity to earn in-service training hours. We are currently working with CPR trainers who offer certification to our parents for a reduced price. Many parents find the most beneficial part of the evening just talking with other parents, sharing and learning from each other's experiences. The group also tries to support foster and adoptive families by hosting events such as our Spring Fling, Christmas "giving tree," and summer picnic.

If you have questions or would like additional information, contact Judy Bextemuller at 636-250-3367 or judyb327@aol.com.

S.A.F.E.

Supporting Adoptive Families Through Education

By Reshelle Summers

S.A.F.E. provides adoptive/foster parents an opportunity to discuss foster and adoption related topics with parent/professional facilitators. Why do parents need a special community? Because all people need the support of friends and a place to talk to others with similar questions and concerns. Having a group of foster/adoptive parents to spend time with can be like having your family to share life events with, lean on, and find comfort and advice when times are tough or when times are good. Talking about all issues surrounding adoption and foster care helps you and your children realize that you're not so different from other families.

S.A.F.E. meets every third Tuesday of the month except August and December. The meetings are currently held at Evangelical Children's Home, St. Louis, MO 63114 from 6 pm to 8:30 pm.

There is no charge for the meetings. Reservations are needed for the meals and the child care. All families are welcome. Contact 314-340-7733 or reshellesummers@foster-adopt.org for more information.

Memo Minute

Children's Division memorandums and policies are available for review at www.dss.mo.gov/cd. Below are synopses of Memos posted since the beginning of 2005 that impact foster and adoptive families.

Memo: CD05-02-- Chafee Pre-Independent Living Program (Pre-ILP) For Youth Ages 14-15 The purpose of this memorandum is to introduce the Chafee Pre-Independent Living Program (Pre-ILP) for youth ages 14-15. This new Pre-ILP will replace the former CHOICES program, which lost funding in fiscal year 2004. The Children's Division recognized the need and the importance to continue serving the younger population, which provided an opportunity to re-evaluate the program for youth under age 16. A workgroup consisting of CD staff and contractors reviewed the CHOICES program, which focused primarily on teaching "soft skills" to younger youth in a classroom setting. The development of a practical application program was envisioned by the workgroup, which would serve youth along a continuum of services from pre-independent living to the young adults who have exited foster care and may need aftercare services.

Memo: CD05-04-- Licensure of Foster/Adoptive Applicants and Communicable Disease The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify the Children's Division's communicable disease policy. As per the Department of Health and Senior Services, a communicable disease is defined as a disease that can be transmitted from one person to another. These diseases can range from mild to serious. This definition is dependent upon a physician's examination and diagnosis.

Memo: CD05-22--Guidelines for the Placement of Additional Children in Resource Homes Where a Child has been Placed in Residential Care The purpose of this memorandum is to establish guidelines for the placement of additional children in a resource home where a child has been placed in residential care. No additional children will be placed in the home without the approval of the Circuit Manager or designee. Specific procedures for staff to consider are included in this memo and in the new Section 4.5 Attachment C. This policy enhancement is a result of regional concern expressed regarding placing additional children in a foster/adoptive home where a child has been placed in residential care. The concern centered around whether the circumstance requiring Residential Treatment of a child would impact the ability to foster additional children in the home.

Memo: CD05-32— Providing Consent For The Education Of Students With Disabilities; The Role Of The Foster Parent "Acting As The Parent"; And The Role Of The Children's Service Worker As "Surrogate Parent" For Children Placed In Licensed Residential Facilities.

The purpose of this memorandum is to review policy pertaining to the Foster Parent's role of "Acting as the Parent" for the educational needs of children in alternative care, and the role of the Children's Service Worker in the absence of a "Surrogate Parent" assigned by the Department of Education for children placed in licensed residential facilities.

Youth's Rights

Participating in case planning

The Children's Division supports youth's participation in their family's case planning activities. One way that is supported by policy is to provide them an opportunity to participate in Family Support Team Meetings when appropriate. This not only allows youth to provide input but can give them a sense of personal control that can be lost when they enter foster care.

CD policy also strengthens youth's voice in their family's case plan through the Service Delivery Grievance. This allows youth a formal avenue to state their dissatisfaction with their placement. To access this right, youth or their guardian should contact their county office to obtain a form (CS-131) to submit to the County Director.

Meet Gary

An animal lover

With a smile bright enough to light up the room, this cute fourteen-year old will touch your heart! Gary is a sincere, and funny young man who is maintaining fair grades this year. His favorite school subjects are P.E. and art. Gary truly loves animals, and says that he would love to become a vet some day. With an adoptive family helping him to stay focused on his goal, he might just make it! Gary has recently taken up gardening as a hobby and says that he loves to "plant plants." Relationships are very important to Gary, and he desperately wants to be part of a "forever family." Gary has a great sense of humor, and loves to have fun. Gary thinks he would like to be part of a small family where he would feel safe. Most of all, Gary just needs a family. Gary is legally free for adoption.

If you would like to learn more about Gary, please contact: Alysha Terrill, Greene County Children's Division, 417-895-6179.



**“Family Connections”
Foster & Adoptive Care Coalition
111 North 7th Street, 6th Floor
St. Louis, MO 63101**

**Resource Rescue
Therapeutic Day Treatment**

Therapeutic Day Treatment (TDT) is a resource available for children ages three to six who are at high risk of losing their foster or daycare placement, due to emotional and behavioral problems. TDT provides intensive intervention and pre-school education until the child can settle back into a traditional childcare setting. Presently, there are a limited number of programs available, but the State of Missouri expects that more will be available soon.

If you have a child you think may qualify from TDT, check the following criteria and contact your child’s case manager for services in your area. To qualify, the child must:

- Be between the ages of three and six
- Be served by CD through foster care, adoption, guardianship
- Be in state custody or have a family centered services case
- Be eligible for Medicaid
- Be placed in or at high risk for placement in psychiatric hospitals or residential care
- Be diagnosed with mental health issues by a doctor or psychiatrist
- Be authorized for services and approved by CD

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Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition
111 North 7th Street, 6th Floor
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